

Message Text

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ACTION EUR-12

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 NEA-10 IO-13 CIAE-00 PM-04 H-02 INR-07

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R 250930Z AUG 76

FM AMEMBASSY VALLETTA

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 6947

INFO AMEMBASSY BONN

AMEMBASSY LONDON

AMEMBASSY PARIS

AMEMBASSY ROME

AMEMBASSY TRIPOLI

EC BRUSSELS 277

USMISSION NATO

DIA

USDOCOSOUTH

LIMITED OFFICIAL USE VALLETTA 0989

E.O. 11652: N/A

TAGS: PINT, PFOR, MT

SUBJ: PRIME MINISTER MINTOFF SPEAKS OUT AGAINST VIOLENCE

REF: VALLETTA 0986

1. IN AN ADDRESS ON AUGUST 23 TO AN OFFICIAL MALTA LABOR PARTY MEETING ASSEMBLED TO ENDORSE THE PARTY'S MANIFESTO AND ITS CANDIDATES FOR THE FORTHCOMING ELECTION, PRIME MINISTER DOM MINTOFF SPOKE OUT AGAINST THE WAVE OF VIOLENCE WHICH HAS THUS FAR MARRED THE MALTESE ELECTORAL CAMPAIGN.

2. MINTOFF REPORTEDLY TOLD HIS FELLOW LABOR PARTY MEMBERS THAT HE HAD GIVEN "ORDERS" TO THE POLICE THAT ANYONE, REGARDLESS OF HIS POLITICAL BELIEFS, WAS TO BE
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"LOCKED UP" IF HE CAUSED TROUBLE DURING THE REMAINING

FOUR WEEKS BEFORE THE ELECTION. MINTOFF SAID HE WANTED TO MAKE HIMSELF CLEAR ABOUT THIS, SO THAT NO ONE WOULD APPROACH HIM OR ANY OTHER (LABOR) CANDIDATE TO INTERVENE ON BEHALF OF SOMEONE WHO MIGHT BE LOCKED UP.

3. MINTOFF ADDED THAT HE WANTED A "FAIR, HONEST, CLEAN AND CALM ELECTION". HE TOLD THE MEETING THAT THE LABOR PARTY SHOULD AVOID TROUBLE WHICH "MIGHT BACKFIRE AGAINST THEM" IN THE ELECTION. HE CLAIMED THAT THE FORTHCOMING ELECTION WOULD BE RECALLED AS ONE MARKED FOR ITS FAIRNESS AND FOR THE HONEST WAY IN WHICH IT WOULD BE HELD. HE CLOSED BY APPEALING TO ALL MALTESE TO REMAIN CALM DURING THE CRUCIAL DAYS BEFORE SEPTEMBER 17-18, AND WARNED HIS LABOR SUPPORTERS THAT "IF WE LOSE OUR HEADS, WE MAY BE SORRY FOR OUR PANIC LATER."

4. COMMENT: MINTOFF'S REMARKS, WHICH WERE WIDELY REPORTED IN THE PRESS AND ON TELEVISION, ARE SIGNIFICANT ON TWO COUNTS. FIRST, AS MINISTER OF POLICE, MINTOFF FINALLY HAS TAKEN PUBLIC RESPONSIBILITY FOR ATTEMPTING TO TONE DOWN THE GROWING POLITICAL VIOLENCE ON THE ISLAND. SECOND, IN HIS WARNING THAT LABOR LEADERS WOULD NOT INTERVENE TO SECURE THE RELEASE OF THEIR OWN AGITATORS IF THEY GET INTO TROUBLE, HE WAS GETTING AT THE KEY TO THE WHOLE PROBLEM. IT IS AN OPEN SECRET IN MALTA THAT NATIONALIST PARTY TOUGHS ARE ARRESTED, AND STAY ARRESTED, WHEN THEY CAUSE VIOLENCE, BUT THE LABOR THUGS ARE IMMEDIATELY RELEASED AS SOON AS A LABOR PARTY OFFICIAL STEPS INTO THE PICTURE. FOR MINTOFF TO HAVE SPOKEN OUT THIS WAY, THE WIDESPREAD BELIEF THAT THE RECENT STREET INCIDENTS WERE DRIVING VOTERS INTO THE NATIONALIST RANKS MUST BE SHARED BY MINTOFF AS WELL. END COMMENT
WIGGINS

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